

How to Use Folders and Subfolders in Gmail

Many users of Outlook have created a system of folders and subfolders over the years as a way to organize their email communications. For example, I'll organize emails associated with a course as follows:

Spring 2010 Semester (*main semester folder*)

 British Literature Survey I (*course folder*)

 Beowulf Response (*individual assignment folder*)

 Chaucer Podcasts (*individual assignment folder*)

 Midterm Examination (*individual assignment folder*)

In its default configuration, Gmail relies on a flat directory structure—in other words, labels are arranged alphabetically, and not hierarchically. This is a relatively new paradigm that's becoming the norm in software and application development—put all information in a broad, but shallow, bucket, and offer robust search tools to find specific data.

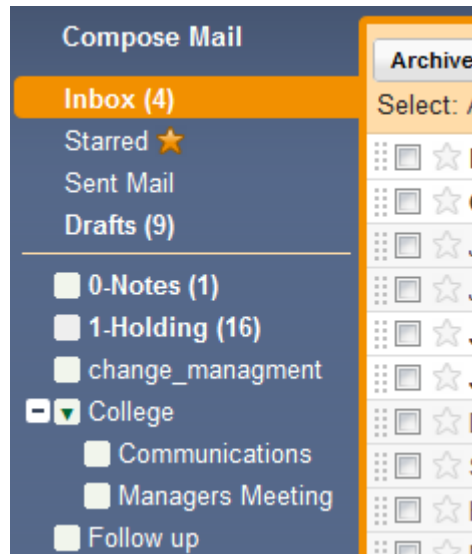
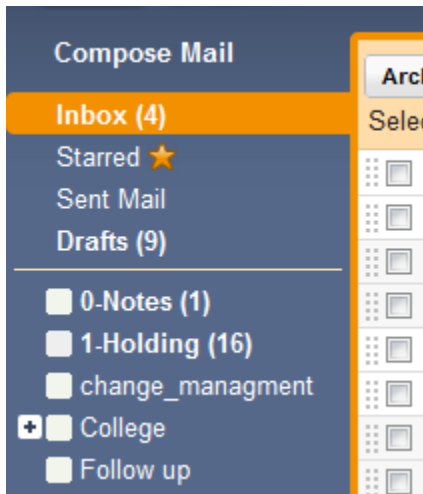
On the other hand, it could be advantageous to combine the powerful search capability of Gmail with an organized directory structure for email archival. Google offers a tool to do just this.

Nestled Folders in Gmail

Gmail refers to folders and subfolders as “nested” folders. What this means is that sub-labels (read: folders) are displayed under collapsible directories. Here’s what I mean:

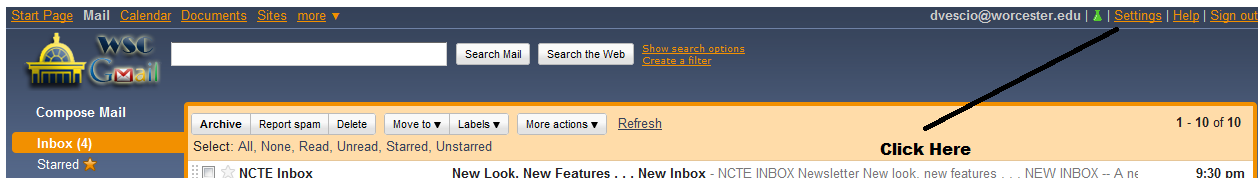
*Note the label **College** in the image below. Also note the plus sign (+) located next to the College label. The plus sign means that there are sub-labels/subfolders contained underneath College.*

Clicking on the plus sign next to College expands the College label to reveal sub-labels/subfolders. Messages can be sorted either in the top level folder, College, or any of College’s sub-folders.

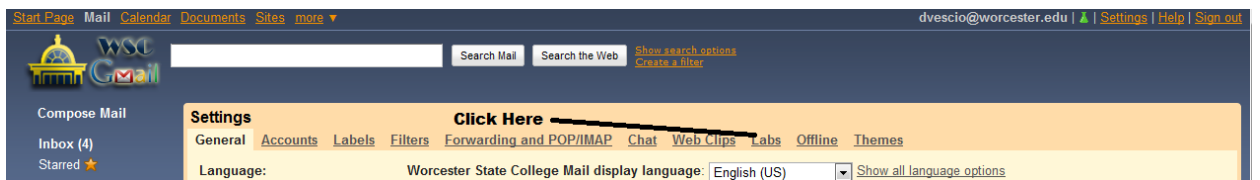


Installing Gmail's Subfolder Tool

Step One: After login to Gmail, click on Settings, which is located top-right of you screen:



Step Two: Click on the Labs tab:



Step Three: Install the Nested Labels tool by clicking Enable:



Step Four: Scroll to the bottom of the Labs page and select *Save Changes*

Using Nested Labels

Note: the forward slash (/) is used to designate a nested label/sub-folder. The syntax is very simple. First, create a label. Next create a sub-label by prefacing it with a forward slash and the main label's name.

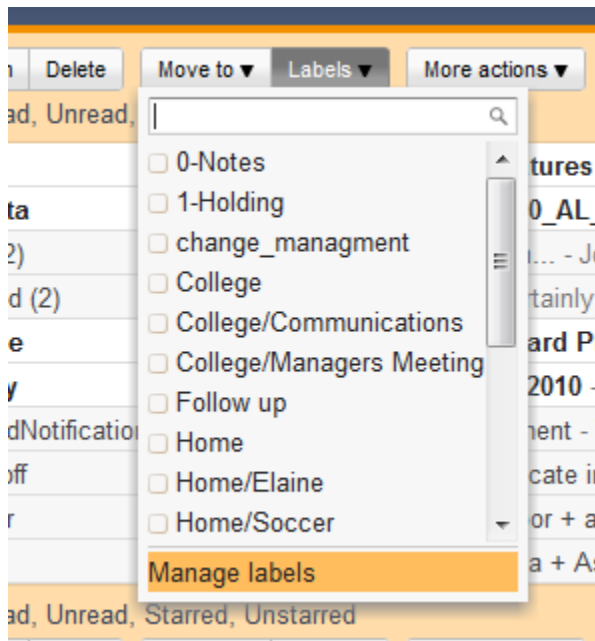
For instance, I want to create a nested label called Communication under the main label College.

First: College (*create main label*)

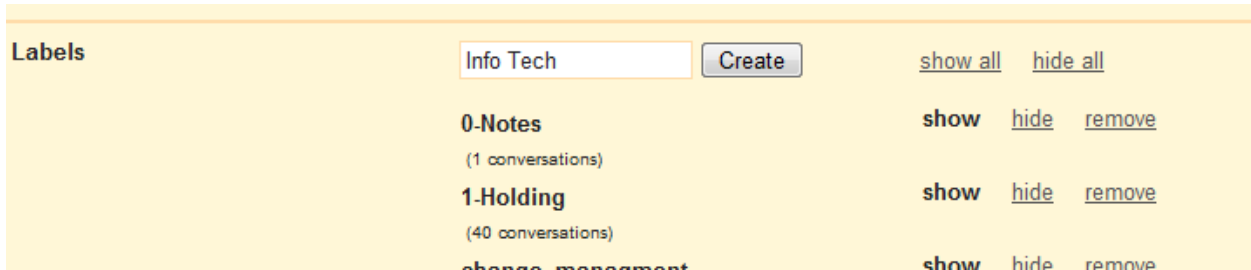
Second: College/Communication (*this creates the nested label/subfolder*)

Labels can be managed easily in Gmail.

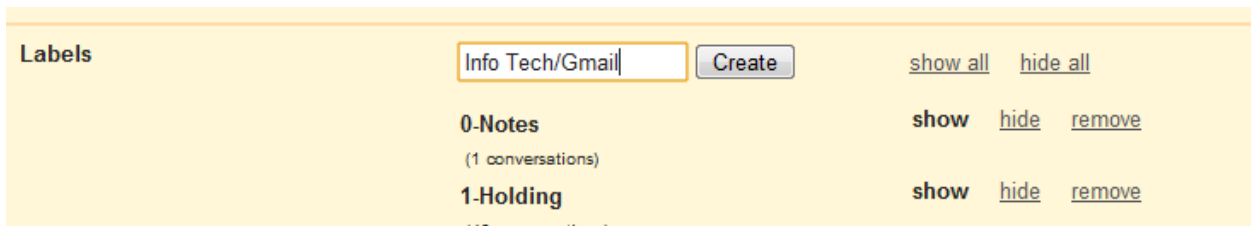
Step One: After Login, click on **Labels** and then select **Manage Labels**



Step Two: In the Labels pane, enter the name of a new label and click **Create**:



Step Three: Create a nested label by prefacing it with a forward slash and the name of the primary label:



Step Four: File messages in your primary labels or nested labels by selecting the appropriate destination under the Move to drop-down menu:

